



# All that Glitters

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## A CENTURY OF RAZZLE-DAZZLE

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## Glitter at home: *caring for your own vintage jewelry*

As far as personal ornamentation is concerned, all that glitters is not always gold, but can be pearls, diamonds, silver, or rhinestones and even plastic! Do you have a favorite family heirloom like a ring, watch, pin or necklace at home? Perhaps you have a special piece of jewelry you picked up while traveling, or something very unique created just for you by a contemporary artisan. The methods you use now to care for, wear, and enjoy these treasures can help to ensure they are in good shape for future generations. Here are some easy steps you can take to conserve your “jewels”:

- To start, have your jewelry inspected and cleaned by a jeweler, so that all the prongs, settings, and clasps are sturdy and functioning. Professionals can assess the condition of your pieces, and let you know about things like cracks or chips that you might not notice at first glance. They can use the correct cleaning method for the type of material your pieces are made from.
- If you need to have repairs or modifications made to a piece, ask the jeweler to select the method that will keep it as original as possible, or that is totally reversible.
- If you choose to wear your vintage pieces after you are certain they are structurally in good shape, protect them from exposure to things like perfumes and aftershaves, or hairspray. The chemicals in these types of products can darken and damage your vintage and contemporary jewelry very quickly.
- Protect your jewelry from scratches, exposure to water, and excessive heat, since some pieces contain stones or components that can easily be damaged.
- When storing your jewelry, mitigate environmental risk factors like acidity, humidity, and temperature by placing your treasures in acid-free boxes lined with acid-free tissue paper, available for purchase on line through archival supply companies like [www.gaylordbros.com](http://www.gaylordbros.com) and [www.metaledgeinc.com](http://www.metaledgeinc.com). If you have a special storage chest and want to use it for your treasures, line it with 100% cotton muslin that you have washed several times. Store your baubles in a location where the temperature and amount of moisture in the air are consistent and do not fluctuate.

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# All that Glitters *(continued)*

- Vintage pocket watches are especially vulnerable to vibration, which can damage springs and movements, so store them in a stable location. (Avoid railroad sidings!)
- Many pieces of vintage and contemporary jewelry feature a certain amount of patina as a part of their overall design. While this may look a bit like tarnish, it is important to maintain the patina to keep the piece as original as possible. Instead of applying harsh cleaners, dust your jewelry with a soft piece of washed flannel or a jeweler's cloth. If your jewelry needs more cleaning than that, take it to your jeweler.
- Consider your jewelry treasures in your insurance plan, and make sure your policy covers each piece in case a disaster strikes. Create an informal inventory featuring a photo, identifying information, and any valuation documents you may have, and keep it in a safe place. This is a great time to create a written history for each item, including age, stories about the family members who wore them, and any other information you want to share with future generations.
- In lieu of wearing your glitter, think about ways to safely display jewelry like pieces of artwork in your home. Glass cabinets and even coffee tables with built in "exhibit case" tops work well, allowing you to share the beauty and history of your items in a safe environment.

